5-25-76
Memphis Press Scimitar
p. 8

JFK Death Questions Develop

Hart Regrets Role In Murder Probe

By RICHARD STARNES
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

WASHINGTON. — Words such as "discretely," "quietly," "tastefully," "diplomatically" and "professionally" keep recurring when Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., talks about the hottest of Washington hot potatoes — the demand by a Senate committee that there be an investigation of the Castro connection with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

At 38, Sen. Hart is a new politics politician who very quickly has learned the cautious footwork of an old politics veteran. He is frankly dismayed to be at the center of the renewed investigation into the century's most atrocious political murder.

"I am not a conspiracist," Hart said recently. "I deplore those who have made a career out of the John Kennedy assassination. It is pure happenstance that I got into this at all. I am unhappy, very reluctant, to be in it."

SENATOR HART

But in it Hart is. With Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, R-Pa., Hart is co-chairman of the Senate Intelligence subcommittee that is just now winding up its investigation of the growing skein of circumstantial evidence that appears to connect the John Kennedy assassination with repeated CIA attempts to murder Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

The Hart-Schweiker subcommittee was formed to investigate the efficiency with which the CIA and the FBI had done their work in probing the Kennedy assassination. The subcommittee learned that both agencies had withheld information from the Warren Commission.

A Profusion of Leads

THE MAJOR CONSEQUENCE, Hart and Schweiker believe, was that the Warren Commission, its investigative eyes blinded, could only conclude that it had no evidence of a conspiracy. But the Hart-Schweiker subcommittee had developed a profusion of leads which both senators believe could produce the hard evidence of a conspiracy.

"There is no need to call into question the principal finding of the Warren Commission: that Lee Harvey Oswald did in fact pull the trigger," Hart observed. "But the whole question of his motivation is open. The CIA was attempting to assassinate Castro before, during and after the Kennedy assassination. Castro knew this, and had gone out of his way to warn American correspondents that the lives of U.S. leaders would be in jeopardy if the attempts continued. This was the vital connection the Warren Commission remained in ignorance of."

An Overlay of Conspiracy

BUT THERE WAS MORE. Hart notes that a seething hellbrew of intrigue and subversion flooded the southern United States when the CIA's secret war against Castro was called off by President Kennedy after the Cuban missile crisis.

"The CIA's army of Cuban exiles didn't all return to Miami and open restaurants," Hart says. "They, or many of them, went underground in every city in the South from Miami to Dallas. They conspired, they had factional disputes, there were leadership struggles, intrigue, mystery. All during the pre-assassination period this was going on. It was an incredible overlay of conspiracy, a vast nexus of possible assassination motives."

Hart notes the principal questions that now seem to cry out for answers from beyond the grave: "Where did these conspirators get their money? Their arms? What was the Mafia connection? We know the Mafia had lost millions in Cuba when Castro took over. We know something of its role in (Castro) assassination attempts. What of possible connections between Oswald and this group?"

It is this "intricate network" that the Senate permanent intelligence committee has been asked to investigate. Hart had hoped his part in it was drawing to a close. "For one thing," he notes, "I think it detracts from some of the much more important initiatives I've taken."

Some Unpopular Initiatives

IMPORTANT AMONG these initiatives, according to Hart's staff, are two that have earned him the disfavor of two of Washington's most formidable pressure groups. One is a bill calling for a pilot project to pass death sentences on a number of federal agencies which fail to pass an automatic period review. More important to Hart's political survival is his co-sponsorship of a bill to break up the big oil companies.

Hart is an unlikely product of both the schools of divinity and law at Yale, a former government attorney, married and the father of a daughter 11 and a son, 9. Running for the Senate was his first stab at elective office. He first won celebrity as a political technician by organizing Sen. George McGovern's successful drive for the Democratic nomination four years ago.